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S E C R E T TOKYO 001548

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/6/2018
TAGS: PREL JA KN
SUBJECT: JAPAN-DPRK: "INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS" TO TAKE PLACE
IN BEIJING

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer per 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (S) Summary: MOFA Asia DG Saiki will meet Ambassador Song Il-ho in Beijing on June 7 for an "informal exchange of views" that will focus on abductions and other issues, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura and Foreign Minister Koumura announced June 6. Previewing these announcements earlier in the day, MOFA told Embassy Tokyo that, depending on how the talks go, the two sides could meet again more formally as early as next week. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Japan and North Korea will hold "unofficial working-level talks" at the Japanese Embassy in Beijing on June 7, Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura announced June 6. The Japanese will be represented by MOFA Asia Bureau Director General Akitaka Saiki; his DPRK counterpart will be Ambassador Song Il-ho. The two sides will engage in a "relatively short exchange of opinions," Machimura continued, adding that the informal talks will focus on abductions and other issues to pave the way for the resumption of more formal bilateral discussions. In a separate news conference, Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura said that "it would be good if the DPRK suddenly comes up with some kind of offer on abductions...but I am not expecting much from the talks."

¶3. (S) Prior to the two announcements, MOFA Northeast Asia Director Shigeo Yamada told Embassy Tokyo that the Beijing meeting would be an "informal exchange of views" that would last approximately two or three hours. Depending on how this discussion goes, the two sides could meet again -- "as soon as next week" -- on a more formal basis. It remains unclear how these more formal talks will be billed; calling them "normalization" or other talks will depend on the North Koreans' attitude at the June 7 meeting, Yamada said.

SCHIEFFER